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ABSTRACT

A random sample mail survey of residents in seven rural southeastern Kentucky counties in 1979 was a retesting of earlier studies of the attitudinal characteristics associated with Appalachian inhabitants. Results showed the value and attitude traits of individualism, self-reliance, fatalism, religious fundamentalism and traditionalism to be very much a part of their beliefs and values. Specifically, results indicated that: in the presence of massive government aid to the region individualism and self-reliance actually increased over the past 20 years: there was a gradual trend toward a more non-fatalistic but also less optimistic view of life: there was little change in religious fundamentalism and 80% of the 1979 respondents agreed with the statement suggesting that the Bible is a sufficient guide to modern life: among the items used to measure traditionalism, education continued to be the most important factor in determining work successes. An examination of three other citizen mail surveys suggested that Appalachian value traits do not differ appreciably from the traits of the inhabitants of the non-Appalachian portions of Kentucky and North Carolina. It was concluded that these five traits, while still very important among Appalachian residents, are not unique to the region. (Author/AN)

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APPALACHIAN VALUES: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

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APPALACHIAN VALUES: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

For several generations, the Appalachian region was bypassed by the major cross-country transportation routes. When travelers from outside the region began passing through the eastern mountains in the late 1800's, they often wrote of the unique qualities of the inhabitants of Appalachia. Out of this early interest in the region came major studies of the Southern Highlands from Horace Kephart (1913) and John C. Campbell (1921). Traits such as individualism, self-reliance and religious fundamentalism were associated with the mountain people. Since the turn of the century, there has been a coninued but sporadic interest in the personal characteristics and values of the inhabitants of the Appalachian region. This interest was greatly accelerated in the early 1960's with the federal government formalizing the existence of an Appalachia and creating a governmental body to deal with its problems. Works by Ford (1962), Caudill (1962) and Weller (1965) brought to the attention of many, the current characteristics of the Appalachian people. The work by Ford was a summary of the findings from a survey he conducted in 1958. Ford reported that the old traits ususally associated with the mountain people no longer applied to a great majority of the residents. In a 1979 retesting of the items Ford used to reach his conclusions twenty-one years ago, we have found that in central Appalachia these traits are still very much a part of the beliefs and values of the Appalachian people. Our conclusions are based on a random sample mail survey of residents in seven eastern Kentucky counties conducted in early 1979. However, an examination of other citizen mail surveys conducted in North Carolina in 1973, and 1975, and in Kentucky in 1979, revealed that Appalachian value traits do not differ appreciably from the traits of the inhabitants of the non-Appalachian portions of those two states. Thus, we conclude that the traits of individualism, self-reliance, fatalism, traditionalism and religious fundamentalism, while still much a part of the values of the inhabitants of Appalachia, are not unique to the region.

APPALACHIAN VALUES: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS*

Introduction

Since the publication of Will Wallace Harney's article "A Strange Land and Peculiar People" in 1873, the inhabitants of Appalachian America have been viewed as a unique people. It was Harney who first asserted an "otherness" to the region (Shapiro, 1978:4). Since that time, hundreds of scholars have attempted to explain this uniqueness. The extensive works of John C. Campbell (1921) and Horace Kephart (1913) highlight the early efforts to explain the characteristics of the region and its people. However, as Robert F. Munn (1965) and Harry W. Ernst and Charles H. Drake (1959) have noted, the interest in those "peculiar people" has certainly waxed and waned.

At the turn of the century, efforts by Berea College President William G. Frost to arouse the nation's awareness of the region's economic and social conditions, helped to further create a notion of Appalachian uniqueness. As a result of these efforts, Protestant denominations began to direct their efforts to the education of the mountain people. "By 1920, there were over one hundred mission schools operating in Appalachia" (Munn, 1965:26). However, the interest in these schools soon diminished and supporting groups withdrew their resources from the area.

In the 1930's, the efforts to organize labor unions in the coal fields once again brought national attention to the special problems of the region. Various groups from outside the area flocked to the strike areas to form protests and to report to the rest of the nation what was happening in the mountaineer's struggle to organize himself. However, when the union

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*The authors acknowledge the assistance of Thomas Ford and James A. Christenson in making comparison information available.

drives were over, national interest in the problems of the region subsided (Munn, 1965:27). Thus, for twenty years (from the late 1930's through the late 1950's) the conditions of the region, which had been seen as urgently needing attention, were now viewed as secondary concerns.

Throughout this "on-again, off-again" interest in Appalachia from the late 1800's to the late 1950's writers have made numerous attempts to describe the values of the mountain people. Since the region was supposedly different than the rest of the United States, writers went to great lengths to describe the traits of the people who were inhabiting this "strange" land. However, much of the information that had been gathered on the Appalachian people had been done in a few isolated communities. Few writers actually travelled throughout the region to observe traits of the inhabitants as a whole. Campbell's (1921) work is the best example of an early attempt at conducting a comprehensive study of the "southern highlander" (Ford, 1962:10).

In 1958, a group of scholars aided by a grant from the Ford Foundation undertook to do a comprehensive survey of the Southern Appalachian Region. One of the major components of this effort was a household survey of Appalachian residents. The material from that effort that gained the greatest prominance was that which pertained to the values and attitudes of the southern highlander. This material was the basis of Thomas Ford's "The Passing of Provincialism" (1962). In this examination, Ford chose four traits commonly associated with the inhabitants of Appalachia--1) individualism and self-reliance, 2) traditionalism, 3) fatalism and 4) fundamentalist religious beliefs. Though these traits had been associated with the people of Appalachia for decades, they had never before been fully tested in the manner that Ford attempted. By interpreting the responses to certain key questions in the survey, Ford concluded:

> The question of whether the people of the Region have clung to their earlier heritage, steadfastly resisting the secular philosophy of an industrial society, can be answered simply and categorically. The answer is no...(T)he old stereotypes that have so long guided social action in the Region no longer apply to the great majority of the residents. The Southern Appalachian people, although they may lag in their social and economic development, are living in the twentieth century (Ford, 1962:34).

It is interesting that three years after the publication of Ford's study a work appeared that also dealt with Appalachian attitudes and values. This work was based on observations in a single isolated community and the conclusions were usually generalized for Appalachia as a whole. Jack Weller's Yesterday's People has been both highly praised and thoroughly criticized since its publication in 1965, so there is little need to comment in any detail on the merits or shortcomings of the book. However, what is interesting about Weller's effort is that he no doubt had read Ford's work, since Ford is cited numerous times. Why then did Weller ignore the portions of Ford's comment's that state that overall, the attitudes and values of the region are similar to the rest of the country. Weller does admit that Ford's study reveals that fatalism and traditionalism are receding (1965:39). However, this point is not used to qualify his claims of the presence of traditionalism and fatalism, but merely to support them in another context. Weller's work to date has sold over 50,000 copies (Information obtained from the University of Kentucky Press). Therefore, it has been one of the more widely circulated

works dealing with the triats of the Appalachian people. Thus, it would seem likely that many of the notions people in the United States have concerning the inhabitants of what is today called central Appalachia, were largely shaped by the work of Weller.

However, Weller was not the only one to use the traits identified by Ford and arrived at different conlusions. At least eight other works between 1965 and 1972 discussed the traits of Appalachian people and have generally reached a different conclusion than did Ford (Ergood, 1978:38). But in 1974 Dwight Billings again asserted that the traits of Appalachians were not much different than non-Appalachians. Others such as Helen Lewis (1970) and Stephen L. Fisher (1978) have also questioned the validity of the concept of an Appalachian subculture.

Since the time of the publication of Ford's work, the existence of an "otherness" to the Appalachian region has become more than a periodic discovery and rediscovery by various groups across the nation. Appalachia has become institutionalized. The boundaries of the region are as clearly defined today as are the state boundaries. Local officials in the thirteen member states of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) are fully aware of whether or not their county or city is included in the designated region and the financial benefits of being included. Approximately twenty newsletters, magazines and journals devoted solely to news and study of the Appalachian region are in current circulation. All but two of these publications had their beginnings after 1965--the year of the formation of the ARC. With the institutionalization of the notion of an Appalachia, how has this affected the values and attitudes of the inhabitants of the region? In particular, how has it affected the inhabitants of central Appalachia--the target of most of the values and attitudes research of the region?

Ford's Value Items

To examine the value changes of Appalachian residents since the institutionalization of the region, we chose to retest seven of the major items from the 1958 Ford study. Six of these items are:

1) Federal aid helps local government provide more and better services.
2) Federal aid to local areas makes people less self-reliant.
3) It reflects badly on a family if they are receiving welfare payments.
4) A person has to live pretty much for today and let tommorrow take care of itself.
5) Children today have a wonderful future to look forward to.
6) The trouble with our churches today is that they are getting away from the old-time religion.

Items 1, 2 and 3 were used by Ford to measure individualism and self-reliance. The respondent's acceptance or unacceptance of federal aid was seen as an indicator of whether or not a person was willing to accept help from others or was fully determined to stand alone. Four and five are measures of fatalism, and item six is used to measure the trait of religious fundamentalism. The seventh item used from the 1958 survey was: What would you say is the one most important factor in a person being successful in his/her work? The response choices were: natural ability, good education or training, hard work, good luck, knowing the right people and liking their work. Ford used this item as a measure of traditionalism through the respondent's view of whether success came through the traditional

means of hard work and ability or the more contemporary means of a good education, proper training and one liking their work.

At the time of the 1958 survey, the median family income for the seven counties in our 1979 survey was about 33% of the national average and the education attainment level was approximately 72% of the national figure. In the past two decades these figures have risen, however, not appreciably. The median family income level (as of mid 1976) for these counties was roughly 39% of national average and the education attainment level is now about 80% of the national norm.[1] Thus, the concern of our examination is not directly the effect of changes in income and educational levels or values, but more of an examination of how being treated as a unique and problematic segment of the U.S. population has changed the values of the residents of a region called central Appalachia.

Data Gathering Procedures

A random sample mail survey of residents in seven eastern Kentucky counties was conducted in early 1979. Completed questionnaires were received from 2,007 individuals, for a response rate of 69 percent. Nine items in the questionnaire were designed to measure the attitudes and values of the respondents. Seven of the items, as mentioned, were taken from the 1958 study. The response categories for those items in 1958 were either a "yes-no" or a "agree-disagree" format. For ease of comparisons between the two sets of data, the four-category "agree-disagree" Likert scale in the present study was collapsed into "agree-disagree" categories. The 1958 "don't know" and "not sure" answers were dropped from the analysis and the remaining percentages were adjusted. In examining the data it is important to keep in mind that the focus on this portion of the analysis is not on whether or not the attitudes and values of Appalachians are

[1] Information if from the U.S. Census Data and the Kentucky Department of Commerce.

different than those of non-Appalachians, but rather, how the attitudes and values of central Appalachia have changed over the past twenty years. Tables 1 and 2 present the responses to each item in the two studies. For all seven items, the responses from the rural Kentucky portion of the 1958 study were separated out to allow for a more accurate comparison between like populations. The 1979 data is exclusively from rural southeastern Kentucky.

Analysis of Ford's Four Major Values

In Night Comes to the Cumberlands, Harry Caudill concluded that "the old fierce pride and sensitive spirit of independence has died from the continuing social traum " (1962:350). At that time Caudill saw the relief roles as a major reason for this lack of independence and an individualistic spirit in the Cumberland plateau. He felt that welfare left people content just to "get by," rather than to continue to fight the elements to earn their meager existence as their ancestors had done. However, Ford and others concluded that "there is little evidence that the acceptance of public assistance was ever seen as incompatible with the value themes of individualism and self-reliance as they were defined by the average highlander" (Ford, 1962:13).

Nonetheless, Ford still concluded that he did not think self-reliance was a highly cherished trait of the Appalachian people since a sizeable number of respondents felt that federal aid did not make people less self-reliant (item number 2). However, when the percentages are adjusted for non-respondents and "don't know" respondents, we can see that even in Ford's sample the majority of those answering the question felt that federal aid did make them less self-reliant. In our study the percentage is 10 percent higher than the regional figure. With over two-thirds of the respondents indicating that federal aid does make people less self-reliant, one is certainly led to speculate that such statements as those made by

Caudill and others in the early 1960's are perhaps not as accurate as once believed. However, the Kentucky portion of the 1958 sample indicates that only about one-third of the people saw federal aid as making them less self-reliant. Perhaps then, Caudill's statements of 1962, though inaccurate about todays eastern Kentuckians, were accurate at the time of their writing.

This point becomes even more convincing when one examines item number 3. In 1958, less than one-seventh of the total regional respondents and only one-twentieth of the Kentucky portion said that it reflected badly on a family if they were receiving welfare. In 1979, the number of people with these anti-welfare feelings has grown to nearly one-half. However, the respondents are not opposed to federal aid in general. In both studies roughly 80 percent of the respondents felt that federal aid does help their local government provide better services to their community, and in the 1958 Kentucky portion the figure was over 97%. Thus a comparison of the responses from the three items used to measure individualism and self-reliance would indicate that in the presence of massive federal, state and private aid to the region, individualism and self-reliance among the people of central Appalachia has actually increased over the past twenty years. This increase should perhaps be interpreted as a positive development rather than a negative development, in light of Caudill's comments seventeen years ago.

In examining the changes in the value of fatalism as indicated by items 4 and 5, the findings demonstrate some vast changes. In response to the item "A person has to live pretty much for today and let tommorrow take care of itself," there was a moderate drop in the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement. This would seem to indicate a gradual trend toward a more non-fatalistic view of life. However, item 5 would seem to

indicate just the opposite. The number of respondents agreeing that children have a wonderful future to look forward to, dropped 50 percent! The reasons for this drop are no doubt multifaceted and do not solely reflect changes just in central Appalachia. However, this finding does suggest that, overall, the residents of central Appalachia are not very optimistic about their future.

Item six asks whether the respondent is satisfied with the way the churches today are operating and if not, whether they should return to operating as in years past? The findings indicate that little change has occurred in people's feeling that the church should return to the "old-time religion." In both studies approximately three-fourths of the respondents indicated a preference for what is commonly referred to as fundamentalist religious beliefs. An additional question which did not appear in the 1958 study was used to further probe the concept of religious fundamentalism. Eighty percent of the respondents agreed with the statement "The Bible is a sufficient guide to all problems of modern life." The responses to these two items would confirm the often heard notion that even though central Appalachians do not belong to the church in great numbers, the teachings of the Bible are greatly respected.

Table 2 presents the item Ford used to measure traditionalism. For the two studies the order of the preferences remained the same, and the 1979 percentages were very close to the original 1958 regional responses.

Education continued to be seen as the most important factor in determining success in work. Other factors of importance were "liking one's work" and "hard work". A decrease in 1979 from the 1958 regional sample and an increase in 1979 from the 1958 Kentucky portion was registered in the percent indicating the importance of "liking one's work". "Knowing the right people" showed an increase in the 1979 study. The importance of education was

reinforced by the response to another question in which 90 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that "education is important in getting a good job". These findings indicate that education is considered extremely important even though the average educational level of the residents is below that of the rest of the nation.

An Examination of Three Statewide Citizen Mail Surveys

One of the often mentioned criticisms of Ford's study, was the absence of data comparing the Appalachian region with areas outside the region. In retesting his items within the region, we were able to document changes in values over time, but were unable to answer the equally important question of: Do the values of the residents of Appalachia differ from the values of the people living outside the region? (Our boundary definition of the Appalachian region is that of the Appalachian Regional Commission.) To help answer this question, a procedure used previously by Billings (1974) to test the hypothesis of the existence of an Appalachian subculture was implemented. By using data from a North Carolina survey, Billings compared various responses of the state's Appalachian residents with those of the non-Appalachian residents.

In our examination, the data for comparison were derived from three independently conducted statewide surveys. These surveys were conducted in North Carolina in 1973 and 1975 and in Kentucky in 1979. The number of respondents were 3,115, 8,847, and 10,773 respectively. In the 1973 and 1979 studies, the respondents were asked the importance (the response categories were slight, moderate, great and very-great) of certain values to them personally. These value items were: achievement, moral integrity, being practical and efficient, national progress, individualism, personal freedom, material comfort, racial equality, sexual equality, patriotism,

political democracy, work, helping others and leisure. In no instance from either survey or any response item was there more than a 6% difference between the Appalachian residents and non-Appalachian residents in the percentage responding to a given response category. In all instances, the answers were virtually the same for persons in non-Appalachian counties as they were for persons in Appalachian counties. It is important to note that the 1979 Kentucky statewide survey was conducted at the same time of the seven county eastern Kentucky survey.

Tables 3 and 4 report the mean scores of the various items for the region and non-region. In a testing of the means, seven of the fifteen items from the Kentucky survey (Table 3) were significant at the .01 level. With an n of over 10,000 such results are not very meaningful. However, despite the large n in the Kentucky sample, over one-half of the items were not statistically significant. For such items as individualism, achievement, being practical and efficient, personal freedom, work and salvation--items which directly pertain to the values traditionally associated with the people of the mountains, the non-Appalachian means are higher than the Appalachian scores. One can conclude from the Kentucky statewide survey that Appalachian residents are in no way more individualistic, self-reliant, traditionalistic or salvation oriented than the non-Appalachian Kentuckians.

In Table 4, similar results are presented from a 1973 statewide survey conducted in North Carolina. In a test of difference between Appalachian and non-Appalachian, only one value item--patriotism, was statistically significant ($p < .01$). This again supports the hypothesis of no general value differences between residents of Appalachia with those outside the region.

The 1975 North Carolina survey provided for a good comparison of some religious and political beliefs in the region with those outside the region. The following seven questions were asked the respondents:

(1) Government should not interfere with religion.

(2) America is God's chosen nation today.

(3) To me, the flag of the United States is sacred.

(4) Religion should not interfere with government.

(5) Human rights come from God and not merely from laws.

(6) If our government does not support religion, government cannot uphold morality.

(7) Church & State should be separate.

The response categories were strongly disagree, disagree, don't know, agree, and strongly agree. In no response category for any of the seven items was there more than a 3% difference between responses from Appalachian residents and non-Appalachian residents. Table 5 presents the mean scores and a statistical test of difference between responses from the region and non-region. Only one item provides any support to the notion of Appalachian residents being more fundamentally religious than the rest of the population. The item "Human rights come from God and not merely from laws" was significant at the .01 level. However, when the n of the sample is taken into account, this point may not be particularly meaningful. Thus, the values of the Appalachian residents of North Carolina are not unlike those of the non-Appalachians as revealed by these items in this survey.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has attempted to access the value changes that have occurred in central Appalachia in the past twenty years. It is our conclusion that when one singles out those particular traits that have been traditionally associated with Appalachia in the literature about the region, those traits still appear to exist. Overall, the 1979 study would indicate an actual increase over the past twenty years in those value and attitude traits. However, the presence of the values of individualism, self-reliance, traditionalism, fatalism and fundamentalist religious beliefs should not be considered as unique to Appalachia. Our statewide survey analysis has indicated that whether a respondent lives in a county designated as Appalachia, or one that is not, his/her value choices (at least through survey analysis) will generally be the same. Thus, those involved in the development of the region should keep in mind that though the problems and circumstances of Appalachia may be unique, the values of the inhabitants of the region are no more unique than those of anyone else in the United States.

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Table 1

PERCENTAGE* OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING WITH GIVEN RESPONSE ITEMS[1]

Response Item	Year of Study 1958 Total Region (N=1466)	1958 Rural Kentucky Portion (N=107)	1979 (N=2007)
1) Federal aid helps local government provide more and better services..	81.0%	97.6%	79.4%
2) Federal aid to local areas makes people less self-reliant.....	60.8	31.1	70.8
3) It reflects badly on a family if they are receiving welfare payments.....	14.1	5.6	46.2
4) A person has to live pretty much for today and let tommorrow take care of itself.....	47.1	56.3	38.4
5) Children today have a wonderful future to look forward to.....	86.1	86.3	34.0
6) The trouble with our churches today is that they are getting away from the old-time religion...	73.9	85.0	72.7

*Percentages adjusted for non-respondents

1) Using z scores, the difference in the responses between the 1958 rural Kentucky portion and the 1979 study in rural Kentucky were significant at the 0.01 level for all six items.

Table 2

THE MEASURE OF TRADITIONALISM

Question: "What would you say is the one most important factor in a person being successful in his/her work?"

Response Categories	Percentage choosing a given response		
	1958 Study		1979 Study
	Total Region (N=1466)	Rural Kentucky Portion (N=107)	(N=1714)
Education	35.2%	45.3%	37.9%
Liking their work	35.2	11.3	26.4*
Hard work	20.5	25.5	18.7
Natural ability	8.0	17.9	8.8*
Knowing the right people	1.1	0.0	8.0*
Good luck	1.1	0.0	0.1*

*using z scores, $P < .01$

Table 3

VALUE ITEM SCORES FROM 1979
KENTUCKY STATEWIDE SURVEY

Value Item	Mean Scores[1] Appalachian Area	Non-Appalachian Area	t
Achievement	2.91	2.92	-0.79
Moral Integrity	3.65	3.67	-1.10
Being Practical and Efficient	3.25	3.29	-2.82*
National Progress	2.82	2.65	-1.66
Individualism	2.64	2.70	-3.09*
Personal Freedom	3.46	3.48	-1.38
Material Comfort	2.79	2.80	-0.67
Racial Equality	2.79	2.74	2.46
Sexual Equality	2.57	2.56	0.57
Patriotism	3.28	3.33	-2.76*
Political Democracy	2.93	3.03	-5.23*
Work	3.13	3.19	-3.23*
Salvation	3.32	3.37	-2.76*
Helping Others	3.28	3.28	0.43
Leisure	2.62	2.70	-4.12*

[1]Means were obtained by assigning the following numerical values to the response categories for "Importance of this value item to you:" 1=Slight, 2=Moderate, 3=Great and 4=Very Great.

*$P < .01$

Table 4

VALUE ITEM SCORES FROM 1973
NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE SURVEY

Value Item	Mean Scores[1] Appalachian Area	Non-Appalachian Area	t
Achievement	2.87	2.89	-0.47
Moral Integrity	3.66	3.59	1.86
Being Practical and Efficient	3.13	3.14	-0.38
National Progress	2.86	2.75	2.20
Individualism	2.59	2.51	1.43
Personal Freedom	3.50	3.46	1.24
Material Comfort	2.61	2.66	-1.10
Racial Equality	2.49	2.56	-1.31
Sexual Equality	2.15	2.26	-2.13
Patriotism	3.37	3.25	2.74*
Political Democracy	3.08	3.04	0.79
Work	3.21	3.26	-1.07
Helping Others	3.08	2.98	2.19
Leisure	2.63	2.64	-0.13

[1]Means were obtained by assigning the following numerical values to the response categories for "Importance of this value item to you:" 1=Slight, 2=Moderate, 3=Great and 4=Very Great.

*$P < .01$

Table 5

VALUE ITEM SCORES FROM 1975
NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE SURVEY

Item	Mean Scores[1] Appalachian Area	Non-Appalachian Area	t
Government should not interfere with religion.	4.28	4.25	1.03
America is God's chosen nation.	3.10	3.01	3.22*
To me, the flag of the United States is sacred.	4.04	3.90	5.62*
Religion should not interfere with government.	3.63	3.63	-0.11
Human rights come from God and not merely from laws.	3.88	3.79	3.48*
If our government does not support religion, government cannot uphold morality.	3.36	3.33	1.03
Church and State should be separate.	3.75	3.70	1.57

[1]Means were obtained by assigning the following numerical values to the response categories: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Don't Know, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree.

*$P < .01$